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ABSTRACT

This monograph offers a practical guide for identifying and managing those stressors that are in the specific domain of the individual--exercise, diet, sleep, interpersonal relations, time and conflict management, and relaxation. The first section covers stress theory; methods to identify and clarify stressors; restoration of a balanced perspective through examining job-related successes, satisfactions, and strengths; and consideration of blocks that often prevent people from integrating stress management techniques into their life styles. In the second section, specific techniques for managing stress are presented. The final section reviews the management techniques and suggestions discussed in previous sections. (JD)

# MANAGING TEACHER STRESS AND BURNOUT

by

Dennis Sparks and Janice Hammond

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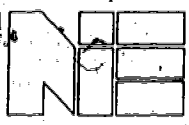


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# FOREWORD

People in all walks of life, especially those whose jobs entail high degrees of responsibility and accountability, experience daily battles with potentially detrimental job stress. Teachers do not have a monopoly on work-related stress, but theirs is a special case.

In publishing this information analysis product, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education is fulfilling an obligation to assist classroom practioners with the problems they face. This monograph is not intended as an all-encompassing treatise on the topic of stress. It is a practical guide for identifying and managing those stressors that are the specific domain of the individual--exercise, diet, sleep, interpersonal relations, time and conflict management, and relaxation. To set the stage, the authors briefly discuss specific causes of teacher stress and research on stress in general. They include numerous activities and techniques for teachers to use in exploring the stressors in their work (and personal) lives.

The Clearinghouse gratefully acknowledges the professional contributions of the authors, Dennis Sparks and Janice Hammond. Dr. Sparks is director of the Northwest Staff Development Center, a state and federally funded teacher center that serves seven school districts in northwest Wayne County, Mich. Dr. Hammond is a staff development consultant with the Wayne County Intermediate School District. Acknowledgements also go to the three content reviewers whose comments were valuable in preparing the final manuscript.

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Readers are invited and encouraged to comment on this monograph and to submit related documents to the Clearinghouse for possible inclusion in the ERIC system. For information, write or call the Senior Information Analyst, ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, One Dupont Circle, Suite 610, Washington, DC 20036, or (202) 293-2450.

SHARON G. BOARDMAN
Editor, ERIC Clearinghouse
on Teacher Education

# PREFACE

As teachers and administrators, we have long recognized the significance of students' emotional development and self-esteem on learning and behavior, but only recently have we acknowledged the importance of the affective side of a teacher's work life on instruction and physical health.

Our involvement in helping teachers and administrators prevent and manage stress and its adverse side effect--burnout--began in 1977. As classroom teachers in metropolitan Detroit, Mich., we observed the "feeling" part of a teacher's job was not discussed at faculty meetings or inservice programs. However, many teachers seemed to be negatively affected by their work, and the common symptoms of this dissatisfaction were excessive fatigue, apathy toward school improvement, and physical tensions that often led to illness. The sense of joy, enthusiasm, and hope with which they had once approached their students was slipping away, and with increasing regularity the teachers we saw were overheard lamenting their choice of career and pondering the causes of their stress.

In November 1977, the first author offered a session on teacher stress at a large scale inservice training program (Sparks 1979). Although the 1,500 participants could choose from 20 different workshops, more than 150 of them crowded into his session on stress. Many more were turned away because there was no more space. Obviously having captured the interest of classroom teachers, this two-hour meeting provided an initial opportunity for the participants to vent feelings of frustration, powerlessness, and despair about their work.

We learned much from this brief inservice session, including the results from a random sample of 50 teachers asked to complete a "Job Satisfaction Questionnaire." Although they had biased views regarding this topic, their responses revealed depth to their feelings. Forty-five percent of the sample group said that if they could choose their careers over, they would not choose teaching; and 70 percent indicated that they always or frequently left school physically or emotionally exhausted. On a positive note, 89 percent of the respondents perceived themselves as being personally involved in their work.

The teachers' enthusiastic response to the first workshop has led to more refined and systematic strategies to address their problem of stress. Workshop activities have been designed to assist educators in identifying the sources of their distress and in planning effective stress management programs. We have presented workshops on this topic to thousands of teachers, administrators, and others, including secretaries and bus drivers, throughout the United States during the past three years.

In this monograph, we present to you the things we have learned from our experiences in these workshops. We intend for the monograph to serve as a useful guide for any educator who wants to explore the effects of stress on his or her life. In the following pages you will read about the causes and consequences of stress and also be exposed to practical stress management techniques. Although the monograph is written for use by the individual

teacher, it may also be used by small groups of three to six colleagues who study its contents collectively and provide mutual support.

From personal experience, we know that the management and prevention of educational stress and burnout are difficult tasks that may require changes in life style, acquisition of new skills, or confrontations with stress-producing institutions. No magical panacea exists; change requires perseverance and patience from the individual, and support from family, friends, and colleagues. However, the benefits for you, the teacher, may include a reclamation of the satisfactions that accompany teaching young people and shaping their lives.

Stress and burnout affect not only mental and physical health, but also performance. If the energy and enthusiasm a teacher brings to the classroom influence learning, then students certainly require and deserve the attention of teachers who are not distracted and demoralized by the symptoms of stress and burnout.

We wish you success as you engage in your struggle with stress.

## CAUSES OF STRESS AND BURNOUT

Case History. Ron B. has taught high school mathematics for the past 23 years. He has been assigned remedial as well as advanced courses for ninth through twelfth graders. Although Ron has had his good and bad days, he nonetheless has received satisfaction from knowing that the skills he taught would have lifelong application. However, in the last four or five years, he noticed that he was losing enthusiasm for his work. Students seemed different from those he remembered when he began teaching; they seemed less motivated to learn and created more behavioral problems in the classroom and the school. When Ron calls parents to report discipline problems or missing homework, he receives verbal shrugs ("I don't know what to do with him either.") or overt hostility ("It's your job to get her to do homework, not mine."). Ron daydreams about retirement, but he still has 15 or 20 more years of teaching. He frequently complains of feeling powerless and trapped.

Case History. Paula O., an elementary school teacher for five years, is a skilled, competent professional who never wanted to do anything else with her life but teach. Because of reductions in force in a declining enrollment school district, Paula has received pink slips each spring since she began teaching. Each time, she was called back to her job in late August, but usually to a new school or grade. The resentment and betrayal she felt about the reassignments and her career uncertainties demoralized her to the degree that her apathy showed in the classroom. Paula cares deeply about children and wants to give them her best, but she saw that her students were being shortchanged. She decided to look for a new career outside of education.

Case History. After four successful years as a junior high teacher, Stephanie K. began a three-year assignment with emotionally impaired special education students. Stephanie knew that her job was important, but she often wondered if her efforts would lead to any lasting changes for her seventh graders. She found her time consumed by frequent meetings and mountains of paperwork, and she felt anger at the negative attitudes of some educators toward mainstreamed special education students. Although Stephanie is a talented teacher, she received little recognition from students, parents, or her principal. She, too, is ready to tackle a position with new challenges, but she knows that few jobs are available in her school district or geographic area. Stephanie feels herself drained emotionally and physically, but does not know what to do.

Teaching is a difficult task under the best of circumstances, but few educators work under optimal conditions. Legislative demands for accountability, widespread criticism of public education, mainstreaming, discipline problems, and reductions in force due to declining enrollments are but a few of the forces that are negatively affecting the morale and job satisfaction of thousands of American teachers.*

The terms "teacher stress" and "burnout" describe the harmful emotional and physical consequences of the strong pressures on contemporary classroom teachers. Teacher stress is a frequent topic at professional conferences, and articles discussing the problem have appeared in newspapers, popular periodicals, and educational journals. Both the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers have identified stress/burnout as a priority. Willard McGuire, president of the National Education Association, lamented that burnout "...has already stricken thousands of sensitive, thoughtful, and dedicated teachers--teachers who are abandoning the profession. Additional thousands may join their peers, for they fear for their physical and mental health" (1979, p. 5).

This section describes some of the prominent causes of stress and burnout. It offers a benchmark against which teachers can compare the stressors that affect their job satisfaction, and it provides a framework for the discussion of stress prevention and management by the individual.

## Research About Stress and Burnout

Perhaps the most frequently cited research on teacher stress was conducted by the Chicago Teachers Union (1978). In this study, more than 22,000 surveys were sent to certified teachers who were union members; approximately 5,000 responses were received and used for data analysis. Of the responding teachers, 56% had suffered a physical illness that they related to stress on the job, and 26% attributed a mental illness to stress on the job. The analysis of the job-related stress factors for these teachers showed that concerns for psychological well-being and physical safety superseded pedagogical issues. The top five stressors were involuntary transferral, managing disruptive children, notice of unsatisfactory performance, threats of personal injury, and overcrowded classrooms. The Chicago teachers perceived themselves as suffering the ill effects of stress, and identified specific elements of their work that were contributing to the problem.

A similar study ("Disruptive Students Cause Teacher Stress" 1980) was conducted by the New York State United Teachers, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers. In this study, urban elementary teachers reported the highest degree of stress of all groups surveyed, and urban teachers at all levels experienced more stress than did their suburban and rural counterparts. The survey also showed that teachers in the 31-40 age group perceived themselves as having the greatest stress. The five most stressful situations for the surveyed New York teachers were managing disruptive children, lack of

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*Stress and burnout affect administrators as well as teachers. Although this monograph focuses primarily on classroom teachers, the concepts and techniques described have potential meaning for all members of the educational community, including students.

administrative support, maintaining self-control when angry, overcrowded classrooms, and the opening week of school.

In September 1976, Instructor magazine published a questionnaire on teacher health and invited responses from its 300,000 readers (Landsmann 1978). More than 9,000 teachers completed the questionnaire (Respondents are assumed to be mostly elementary teachers, as Instructor's content focuses on that level). It was found that 84% of the respondents believed there were health hazards in teaching, and 75% reported that at least some of the work days they lost to illness were related to stress or tension. These teachers indicated that stress was a major force affecting their health. Stressors they cited included large class size, lack of teaching materials, increasing discipline problems, public pressures on teachers, and difficulty in accepting that there are limits to what schooling can achieve.

The Newark Teacher Center (New Jersey) surveyed its district teachers and found that approximately 75% of the respondents reported teaching to be moderately stressful, with 41% indicating that their jobs were very or extremely stressful (Newark Teacher Center Newsletter 1979). These urban teachers said that the most stressful parts of their work had to do with student characteristics, such as poor attitudes toward school work, low motivation, and behavior problems.

Data gathered by the National Education Association also point to major sources of teacher stress (McGuire 1979). The NEA's 1979 nationwide teacher opinion poll revealed that approximately one teacher out of 20 was physically attacked by students on school property during the 1978-79 school year. This figure represents a 57% increase in assaults against teachers compared with the 1977-78 school year. About a fourth of the respondents said that their personal property was damaged at school during the 1978-79 school year.

A Detroit Free Press study of 263 randomly selected Detroit public school teachers found that almost half of the surveyed teachers had been threatened with violence while at school, and about one out of four had been assaulted by students, parents, or school intruders (June 29, 1980).

School administrators also face harmful stress in their work. In an Oregon study of superintendents, central office staff, and principals ("Stressors that Boost Your Blood Pressure" 1979), it was found that four of the top 10 stressors were related to time pressures or the use of time. The five most bothersome situations were: complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies; participating in meetings that "take up too much time"; trying to complete reports and other paperwork on time; trying to gain public approval and/or financial support for school programs; and trying to resolve parent/school conflicts.

Recent research at the University of Michigan (Cooke and Kornbluh 1980) compared teachers' quality of work life with that of 2,000 workers of all kinds who were included in the university's Institute of Social Research 1977 Quality of Employment Survey. The sample population included 200 southeastern Michigan teachers from 25 schools. It was found that teachers were more than twice as likely as other workers nationally to report job-related illnesses. Teachers listed several major sources of dissatisfaction, including health and safety hazards (personal attack, risk of catching diseases from students, etc.), unpleasant work environment (inadequate furniture, poor ventilation, etc.), desire for additional fringe benefits, inadequate resources, and poor job security and mobility. Other findings from this study are also of interest. First, teachers were found to be less satisfied with their jobs than were workers from all categories included in the national sample.

Second, teachers were more dissatisfied compared to college graduates in other professions. Third, job satisfaction among teachers varied from school to school; the quality of work life was higher in schools with good communication and shared decision making between teachers and administrators.

## Generalizations About Stress and Burnout

There is no typical burned-out teacher. Stress and burnout affect teachers at all levels in rural, suburban, and urban schools. Because each teacher is a unique human being, it is impossible to list all the occurrences that cause harmful stress. And, because teachers are people too, difficulties in their personal lives may affect the stamina and emotional energy they bring to their classrooms. From the authors' experiences in workshops and one-to-one conversations with teachers, the following generalizations about job-related stress have been drawn.

1. Poor quality relationships. Teachers frequently complain of not being listened to or respected by students, parents, administrators, and colleagues. Teachers also resent being forced to teach a curriculum or execute policies when they do not feel significantly involved in the decision-making processes that lead to the curriculum or policy. In addition, teachers are stressed by the large number of interpersonal relationships that they encounter in a typical workday. When these relationships are emotionally charged, a mistake in handling a situation may have disastrous implications (e.g., a teacher has only seconds to decide how to manage a disruptive student who might become violent). Commonly, teachers go home feeling that they do not want to solve a problem, resolve a conflict, or even carry on an extended conversation. They are simply overwhelmed by their workday.

2. Sense of isolation. Teachers spend most of their workday isolated with students in classrooms. There is little or no opportunity for constructive, supportive discussions with colleagues regarding teaching problems or job-related feelings. The brief moments that teachers do have together lend themselves readily to superficial complaints about students, administration, or the school board. Repetitious complaining can be stressful in itself, and it tends to reinforce teachers' feelings of hopelessness about their situations.

3. Feelings of powerlessness and responsibility. Teachers often feel powerless: They may have little or no control over the choice of textbooks or the availability of instructional materials; their schools may have inadequate libraries and poorly heated or ventilated classrooms; and they also perceive that they have little influence over some factors that are related directly to instruction, including unreasonably large class sizes, disruptive students, and too wide a range of abilities within classes. They frequently are frustrated by students' negative attitudes toward school and learning, poor work habits, and irresponsible behavior. Another element of helplessness is the sense of inadequacy that some teachers experience because they have not been trained to manage effectively the day-to-day problems of their assignments (e.g., emotionally impaired and learning disabled students, children reading several years below grade level, etc.).

These events or circumstances alone do not produce stress or burnout in

teachers. Rather, it is a sense of responsibility for these situations coupled with the feeling of powerlessness that produces harmful stress. For example, a teacher may feel tense not knowing how to help a particular student in class. Possibly the teacher thinks, "I should know what to do to make things better." Another teacher with a similar student may believe that "there is nothing I or anyone else can do to improve the situation." Theoretically, both teachers have equal power, but the first teacher is likely to feel more stress. The latter teacher does not perceive that he or she has any options or personal responsibility.

Powerlessness by itself does not produce tension and stress. Feelings of failure and hopelessness often result from unrealistic goals or working against the grain of a situation. To cope with burnout, some teachers (perhaps unconsciously) have decreased their sense of caring about students and work. They reject the responsibility. This emotional deadening is a defense against what they perceive to be the unpleasant realities of teaching.

4. Role Conflict. Teachers feel pulled in different directions internally by the competing demands of students, parents, and administrators, some of whose expectations may be unreasonable and in conflict with one another. Activities that receive the support of a specific group might prove displeasing to another constituency, and teachers are caught in the middle of the dispute. For example, a junior high principal may ban gum chewing in the school and order teachers to enforce the rule. Students rebel at this edict, and many teachers consider the rule to be petty and unenforceable. Diligent teachers may feel "damned if they do and damned if they don't."

Other important sources of potential conflict are found in the multiple roles of a teacher--professional person, spouse, parent. These various roles compete for a teacher's time, particularly if he or she is a perfectionist. Teachers want to perform well in the classroom, which means taking school work home in the evenings or on weekends. If they are married and have children, they want to be loving husbands or wives and attentive parents who spend quality time with their children. Usually the day has too few hours to do all these things, and the result is a perpetual sense of time pressure and tension. Because teachers are generally caring, giving people by temperament, it is easy for them to give until they feel drained and resentful.

5. Time management problems. The time stressor is related closely to the multiple-role conflict. Because there are so many things to do every day, time is a precious commodity. Sleep may be sacrificed so that papers can be corrected, graduate classes and workshops attended, and household chores completed. Personal interests that tend to alleviate stress, such as reading, music, and exercise, often are relegated to the lowest priority and ignored because there is no leftover time or energy.

Time management problems are experienced in the classroom when numerous demands are made on the limited instructional time that teachers have available. Teachers are expected to teach basic skills, address affective concerns of students, and meet the needs of mainstreamed and gifted children. Although most teachers support special services, the classroom teacher's work is more difficult when students leave class for instrumental music, counseling, and other programs. While public insistence for accountability increases, the actual time available for instruction has dwindled in some cases. Teachers are caught in a bind.

6. Life changes and stages. Most people probably would agree that it is difficult to leave one's personal life out of the workplace, but this is particularly true for teachers. The enthusiasm, patience, and physical stamina that teachers bring to their students are essential in teaching, but these characteristics can be significantly affected by events that occur outside of school.

Common causes of stress and burnout are life changes. Basic research in this area was conducted by Holmes and Rahe (1967), who found that physical illness often was preceded by the stress that accompanied major changes in a person's life. Holmes and Rahe measured the effects of these life change events, and developed the "Social Readjustment Rating Scale" (see table 1).

Too much change, even positive change, in too short a time can produce harmful stress and physical illness. To illustrate, a score of less than 150 on the scale indicates less than a 37% chance of illness within the next two years. A score of 150-300 points signifies a 51% likelihood of physical disorder, and a score of more than 300 predicts an 80% chance of illness. Teachers who are experiencing major life change events (e.g., death of a spouse, divorce, etc.), and those who accumulate numerous less traumatic changes, may find the burdens and responsiblities of their work more difficult to bear until they have had an opportunity to adapt to their new life styles.

The concept of life change events takes on special meaning for teachers who are victims of reductions in force, school closings, involuntary reassignments, etc. Although these events are not recorded as such on the Social Readjustment Rating Scale, it is easy to understand the feelings of frustration, betrayal, and insecurity the events often produce. The cumulative effects of these changes may take their toll on a teacher's mental and physical health.

The notion of passages between life stages was popularized by Levinson (1978) and Sheehy (1976). They illustrated how adults encounter predictable life crises approximately every 7 to 10 years that may cause them to reexamine their values, goals, marriages, and careers. Often these crises are minor, but at times they can be quite severe and produce considerable stress for the person undergoing the transition. While some teachers experiencing this turmoil find that they have less emotional and physical energy to bring to their classrooms, others report that "work is my salvation" during these difficult periods.

7. Institutional practices and policies. Procedures and policies of a school and/or school district are common sources of stress among teachers. When communication is inadequate and opportunities do not exist for resolving conflicts and solving problems, teachers may feel chronically frustrated and tense. Unreasonable and illogical procedures can leave teachers feeling that their abilities and time are being wasted. Certain structural characteristics of schools (e.g., top-down decision making, inadequate or poorly timed opportunities to meet with colleagues, etc.) are also likely to increase teachers' sense of isolation and powerlessness. In addition, some policies can have long-term implications for teachers. For example, relatively arbitrary processes for layoff and recall due to reduction in force as specified in the union contract may cause teachers to believe that their careers and futures depend on the capricious whims of a few remote and uncaring individuals.

TABLE 1.--SOCIAL READJUSTMENT RATING SCALE

| Life Event | Mean Value |
|---|---|
| 1. Death of spouse | 100 |
| 2. Divorce | 73 |
| 3. Marital separation from mate | 65 |
| 4. Detention in jail or other institution | 63 |
| 5. Death of a close family member | 63 |
| 6. Major personal injury or illness | 53 |
| 7. Marriage | 50 |
| 8. Being fired at work | 47 |
| 9. Marital reconciliation with mate | 45 |
| 10. Retirement from work | 45 |
| 11. Major change in health/behavior of family member | 44 |
| 12. Pregnancy | 40 |
| 13. Sexual difficulties | 39 |
| 14. Gaining a new family member | 39 |
| 15. Major business readjustment | 39 |
| 16. Major change in financial state | 38 |
| 17. Death of a close friend | 37 |
| 18. Changing to a different line of work | 36 |
| 19. Major change in the number of arguments with spouse | 35 |
| 20. Taking on a mortgage greater than $10,000 | 31 |
| 21. Foreclosure on a mortgage or loan | 30 |
| 22. Major change in responsibilities at work | 29 |
| 23. Son or daughter leaving home | 29 |
| 24. In-law troubles | 29 |
| 25. Outstanding personal achievement | 28 |
| 26. Wife beginning or ceasing work outside the home | 26 |
| 27. Beginning or ceasing formal schooling | 26 |
| 28. Major change in living conditions | 25 |
| 29. Revision of personal habits | 24 |
| 30. Troubles with the boss | 23 |
| 31. Major change in working hours or conditions | 20 |
| 32. Change in residence | 20 |
| 33. Changing to a new school | 20 |
| 34. Major change in type and/or amount of recreation | 19 |
| 35. Major change in church activities | 19 |
| 36. Major change in social activities | 18 |
| 37. Taking on a mortgage or loan less than $10,000 | 17 |
| 38. Major change in sleeping habits | 16 |
| 39. Major change in number of family get-togethers | 15 |
| 40. Major change in eating habits | 15 |
| 41. Vacation | 13 |
| 42. Christmas | 12 |
| 43. Minor violations of the law | 11 |

8. Public criticisms of teachers and schools. News media often report on declining Scholastic Aptitude Test scores, functionally illiterate high school graduates, and lack of discipline in schools. A Time magazine cover story titled "Help! Teacher Can't Teach" (June 16, 1980) described the problems of teacher illiteracy, the low intellectual quality of individuals entering college of education programs, and the virtual chaos that exists in many schools. The article's negative tone left many competent teachers feeling misunderstood and unappreciated in their struggle in often hostile environments with little or no public recognition of their efforts and skills.

The 1979 Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools reported that 23% of the respondents think the main thing a school has to do before it can receive an "A" rating is "improve the quality of teachers." According to the survey, in the public's view the most essential characteristic of an ideal school is that "teachers should be well-qualified and should be required to pass state board examinations before they are hired as well as at regular intervals thereafter." The majority of teachers are no different from other professionals in their respect for competent performance. However, widespread publication of these findings contributes to teachers' defensiveness about their work, undermines morale, and causes effective teachers to seek out new careers.

## Summary

This chapter has reviewed some of the prominent causes of teacher stress and burnout. However, it is important to remember that this list of stress factors is neither inclusive nor exhaustive, because there are literally thousands of sources of stress in a teacher's personal and professional life. The following sections discuss the effects of stress on the human body, and offer strategies to assist the individual in developing greater self-understanding and clarity regarding stressors. The importance of establishing a balanced perspective toward teaching also is emphasized.

## FACTS ABOUT STRESS, AND ACTIVITIES TO DIAGNOSE IT

Stress is a serious, pervasive problem. As Pelletier said, "Stress and its manifestations in psychosomatic disorders is the most evident single factor contributing to the 'afflictions of civilization'" (1979, p. 10). These "afflictions" include heart disease, cancer, arthritis, and depression. A 1979 Harris survey found that 89% of Americans were seeking "experiences that make you peaceful" ("Americans Search" 1979). Yet, Hans Selye, among the foremost researchers on stress, said that "stress is the spice of life" (1976, p. xv). This chapter explores these seemingly contradictory points and offers strategies to identify stressors and increase awareness of their effects.

### Stress Theory

> Stress begins with anxiety--a disturbance arising from some kind of imbalance within us. All of us, each day, experience some kind of threatening condition or disharmony. This anxiety leads to tension. Tension is a physical reaction to anxiety. When we are tense, nervous impulses cause changes in our body. When tension reaches a degree of intensity that has an adverse effect on the body, we are under stress. (Miller 1979, p. 8)

The "imbalance" for teachers can be caused by the factors described in chapter one, such as managing disruptive children and poor quality relationships. That being the case, it would appear that no one in education can completely avoid the physical tension "that has an adverse effect on the body...." Observing stress broadly, Selye pointed out not only that stress is unavoidable, but also that its effects can be positive or negative:

> No one can live without experiencing some degree of stress all the time. You may think that only serious disease or intensive physical or mental injury can cause stress. This is false. Crossing a busy intersection, exposure to a draft, or even sheer joy are enough to activate the body's stress mechanism to some extent. Stress is not necessarily bad for you; it is also the spice of life, for any emotion, any activity causes stress.... The same stress that makes one person sick can be an invigorating experience for another. (1976, p. xv)

It may be useful to examine the body's physical reaction to stress, which occurs along the hypothalamus-pituitary-adreno-cortical axis. Kremer and Owen outlined the process as follows:

> Messages sent from the nervous system reach the hypothalamus and are relayed to the pituitary and adrenal glands. This pituitary-adrenal axis pumps into the bloodstream hormones that influence heart rate and respiration, inhibit visceral activity, and, in general, prepare the body to cope with the perceived demand. If there is appropriate action to be taken by the individual, mobilization is expressed and arousal diminished. The individual is then able to rest and return to pre-exposure levels. If, however, the extant mobilization is not used to cope in an adequately expressive way, arousal and preparedness continue in the body. (1979, p. 42)

This internal mobilization has been called the "fight or flight" response. Natural selection programmed this reaction into the genes of human beings, and those who could quickly prepare themselves to fight or flee the many dangers of primeval living survived to pass this capacity to their successors. The act of doing battle with a wild animal (stressor), or running from it, allowed for an immediate discharge of the internal mobilization that had occurred. However, fight or flight is usually an inappropriate response to stressors encountered by classroom teachers, and a residual state of preparedness or physiological tension may linger after the stressor is gone.

Selye (1976) considered the body's reaction to a stressor as an adaptive response, because the body tends toward internal stability, called homeostasis. This "thermostat" regulates various physiological functions, including body temperature, blood pressure, respiration, and heart rate. When faced with a stressful stimulus, the body reacts (alarm reaction), adjusts (resistance stage), and finally succumbs if the stress continues (exhaustion). Selye termed this three-stage adaptive process the "General Adaptation Syndrome" (G.A.S.).

To illustrate the G.A.S., imagine a person being thrown suddenly into cold water. There would be an immediate sense of shock (alarm reaction), followed quickly by internal adjustments that would allow the body to maintain itself in the water for a short time (resistance stage). However, the body's capacity to resist the stressor is finite, and the person would tire quickly and soon die (exhaustion) if not removed from the water. According to Selye, one's reservoir of adaptive energy is limited, and cannot always be completely restored by rest. Each stressor, depending on its intensity and duration, takes away a certain amount of an organism's adaptative capability.

The effects of the G.A.S. on teachers is illustrated in the following example. A female high school instructor is confronted by a hostile student demanding that a composition grade be changed. Within minutes the student becomes angry and the teacher begins to fear for her safety (alarm reaction). This potentially dangerous situation brings on a fight or flight response; the teacher's heart rate and respiration increase, adrenalin starts to flow as she considers the options, and her muscles tense throughout her body (resistance stage). Unless she is physically attacked by the student and forced to fight or run, there will be no quick, natural way to dissipate the physical arousal that has occurred. The teacher may experience residual tension from this event for hours. If this kind of situation happens regularly, she may begin to suffer the debilitating effects of stress, such as headaches, hypertension, insomnia, and excessive fatigue (exhaustion stage).

Selye's notion of stress as a pervasive aspect of living implies that stress cannot be avoided, and that it can be caused by pleasant stimuli (a kiss) as well as unpleasant experiences (an argument with a spouse). Selye

labeled the harmful physiological consequences of adaptation as "distress," and called the pleasant sensations that may accompany certain stressors "eustress" (eu- is the Greek prefix meaning "good"). Thus, a constant struggle to manage an unruly class may raise a teacher's blood pressure (distress), while the deadline pressures of a term paper may motivate graduate students and increase their efficiency (eustress). The concept of eustress helps explain Selye's belief that stress can be the "spice of life."

It is important to keep in mind that one person's distress may be another person's eustress. Physical factors and learned responses or conditioning determine whether an event is perceived as pleasant or unpleasant. For example, the act of running five miles may be a satisfying stressor for a well-conditioned runner, but this same activity could threaten the life of someone who is unprepared for this vigorous activity. Likewise, interpersonal conflict stimulates some people, but is a source of tremendous distress for others. One teacher may thrive in a classroom environment in which students work independently at their own paces on unique projects; another teacher may find him- or herself perpetually tense in this situation because it seems chaotic and disorganized.

In addition, an event that is distressful at one time may be perceived as eustressful at another, or vice versa. For example, physical exercise that at first is experienced as distressful may become eustressful when the individual develops endurance through practice; also, teachers who are distressed by discipline problems in class can learn interpersonal skills to help them feel more competent in these inevitable situations. Human capacities that are not stressed (have no demands placed on them) will atrophy in the same way that unused muscles gradually lose their strength and an unchallenged brain loses its efficiency and power.

A useful analogy compares a person to a car that is idling in neutral, fed by a perpetual supply of gasoline. After a while, the car's engine begins to malfunction, misfire, and perhaps even stall (distress), because a car is built to be driven at various speeds to ensure its smooth performance (eustress). Damage to the car's engine is comparable to the G.A.S. exhaustion stage in a person, whose body is not intended to function for long periods of time mobilized for fight or flight. Both the car and the human are likely to be damaged at their "weakest links."

The weakest link varies from person to person, depending on both genetic makeup and early socialization. Some individuals experience stress as a headache or backache brought on by muscular tension; others may develop upper respiratory infections, ulcers, hypertension, or asthma. The list of symptoms seems as endless as the list of stressors.

Regardless of its causes and effects, stress can be controlled individually to a certain degree to prevent or retard serious illness. The controllable factors include diet, sleep, exercise, and relaxation, among other things, but controlling these factors first requires self-understanding.

## Self-Understanding

The goal of stress management is not to eliminate the adaptive response, but to determine and control individual optimal stress levels. Due to differences in genetic inheritance and learned responses, the intensity and duration of a stimulus that will lead to stress will vary among individuals. Because self-awareness is so important in managing stress, the following

activities are suggested to assist you in understanding stressors in your life and the personal meaning they hold.

Turtle/Racehorse Continuum

Because many educators have reported stress due to time management problems, the "Turtle/Racehorse Continuum" (Sparks in press) has been designed to assist the individual in examining stress as it relates to the pace of living. Selye coined the terms "turtles" and "racehorses" to describe distinct approaches to the use of time (Cherry 1978). Turtles enjoy a peaceful, unhurried, tranquil life style, while racehorses thrive on a fast-paced, busy existence of dashing from one activity to another. Racehorses do not experience the tension that their kind of life style might produce in a turtle and vice versa.

It is desirable that each person find an appropriate match between personality type and pace of living. Note, value judgments should not be placed on either of these terms; it is unfair to describe turtles as lazy and racehorses as heart attack prone neurotics. Rather, people should appreciate their unique styles and the styles of others and better understand how the personal style interacts with environment to produce stress.

The Turtle/Racehorse Continuum (figure 1) can help you illustrate the relationship between your personality type and your pace of work and personal life. Few people are pure types; most people fall on the continuum between the two extremes, and no person remains fixed on the continuum. The pace of living may accelerate to a certain extent before it produces tension, and decelerate before the lack of stimulation becomes stressful. For example, an individual may be able subjectively to go as fast as an "8" and as slow as a "4" before feeling stress. Within the 4 to 8 range the person will feel relatively comfortable, but above and below these points the person experiences stress.

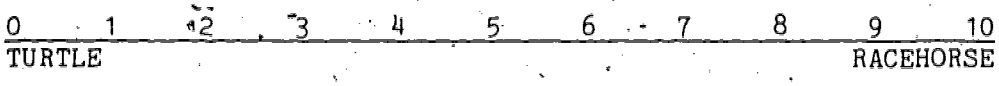


Figure 1.--Turtle/Racehorse Continuum

Take a moment and mark "Xs" on the continuum at your comfortable high (racehorse) and low (turtle) points. Remember, these points only represent your best guess at this moment. You might perceive them differently at another time. As the second step in using the continuum, circle the numbers that indicate the pace of your work and personal life, both when it moves like a racehorse, and when it moves more like a turtle's speed. You now have two "Xs" and two "circles" on the continuum.

Discrepancies are common between the upper and lower boundaries of the work/personal life circles and the Xs that represent a person's unique comfort zone. The areas between the comfort zone Xs and the work/personal life circles--the extremes that any person experiences at both ends of the continuum--are apt to cause undue stress.

Completion of the Turtle/Racehorse Continuum may, in itself, give a

teacher insight into personal sources of stress. At times, a teacher may take on more responsibilities at school and home than is wise; at other times, such as the end of the semester and vacations, tension may be brought on by having too little to do.

Asking yourself the following questions may help you isolate some of your stress sources: What specific events seem to be pushing my life in a racehorse direction right now? Which of them are related to my work? What factors are contributing to the lack of stimulation that I am experiencing? Which parts of my work and personal life leave me feeling bored and restless? When I am aware of "pace of life" tensions, over which aspects of the situation do I have control? Are there tension-producing responsibilities (at home or work) to which I can say "no"? Will teaching a new unit or trying a promising approach provide excitement in an otherwise dull day?

The turtle/racehorse concept also can illustrate conflicts that arise in the classroom or school regarding the use of time. For example, a racehorse teacher may become frustrated when turtle students resist proceeding at a racehorse pace. Likewise, a turtle teacher may prefer a slow, methodical approach to a lesson and experience anger because some students always "want to get on with it." Also, the principal may act in a way that is either significantly slower or faster than the speed desired by the faculty. Although a number of causes can produce each of these situations, an awareness of turtle/racehorse differences may raise the level of tolerance for different personality factors in the use of time. When the gap between individuals or groups is too large and provokes ongoing problems, it may be useful for the persons involved to sit down together to arrive at a mutually agreeable schedule for the completion of the task. The authors suggest that students and teacher in the classroom, or principal and teachers at a faculty meeting, might complete the Turtle/Racehorse Continuum together to learn one another's habits and address time-related conflicts.

The Turtle/Racehorse Continuum serves as a springboard for considering the stressful relationship between home and career and for exploring the personal balance of work and leisure. Eustressful leisure activities can minimize the effects of distress by renewing a teacher at the end of the school day. However, if recreational time is approached in a driven, compulsive fashion, it is likely to contribute to a racehorse pace that produces distress in more turtle-like individuals. Leisure should energize and inspire a person; it should not be a source of additional time pressures.

## Stress Inventory

The Stress Inventory (Sparks and Ingram 1979) is designed to help the individual develop a more objective viewpoint regarding stressors. Distress often interferes with the ability to think clearly about the sources of stress. Because accurate self-assessment must precede action, the faulty thinking and distorted perceptions produced by stress can block the formulation of effective stress management. When complaints are vague and poorly defined ("I just don't feel like teaching anymore"), it is impossible to take appropriate steps directed at specific stressors.

The following directions explain how to complete the Stress Inventory in table 2. First, list in the left column specific distressful events or circumstances that relate to your work and personal life. Be honest and write down everything that comes to mind. Be as specific as possible in describing

TABLE 2.--STRESS INVENTORY

| Distressful Situation | Who is Involved? | How Frequent? | Degree of Control? | How Dealt With? |
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Coding

| Who is Involved? | How Frequent? | Degree of Control? | How Handled? |
|---|---|---|---|
| A=Administrators | A=Always | HC=High level of control | A=Anger |
| B=Board of Education | O=Often | SC=Some control | I=Ignore |
| C=Your own children | S=Seldom | NC=No control | H=Humor |
| P=Parents | | | S=Seek others' support |
| M=Me | | | D=Depress |
| S=Pupils | | | W=Worry |
| SS=Support Staff | | | O=Other (describe) |
| T=Other Teachers | | | |
| H/W=Husband or wife | | | |
| O=Other (specify) | | | |

a situation (e.g., list "the disruptive student in my third hour class," rather than "the way kids are today"), but do not necessarily write a paragraph about each stressor. Key words to jog your memory later will suffice. Include minor stressors as well as major ones.

After listing your stressors, complete the codings in the various columns to the right. These codes should help you see your stressors from a fresh perspective. The codes for "Who is involved?" and "How do you deal with it?" may have more than one answer per stressor (e.g., a stressful event might involve administrators, students, and parents). In addition to the codings, note with an asterisk (*) the stressors for which you have some notion of what you might do to improve the situation. Then, write the number 1 beside the stressful event for which you would most like to do something.

The final step in the process requires that you draw conclusions from your data. Examine your Stress Inventory for themes or patterns in your codings. Do certain categories of people seem to be involved in your stress more than others? How often does the "me" coding occur? Do you have more or less control in these situations than you expected? Do you tend to respond to stressful events in certain predictable ways such as anger, worry, or humor?

After scanning your stressors and codings, record your observations in the form of "I learned...," "I was surprised at...," or "I was reminded that..." statements. These sentences represent your objective synthesis of the data and often produce valuable personal insight. Typical conclusions of teachers include, "I learned that I have more control over my stress than I thought," and "I was surprised that so many of my stressors occur outside of school. Work is really my salvation." To further clarify your findings, discuss them with an empathetic listener who can ask probing questions, or better yet, complete the Stress Inventory with a group of teachers and together discuss the meanings and implications of the various findings.

## Successes, Satisfactions, and Personal Strengths

A large amount of stress for teachers is caused by a continual bombardment of negative messages from students, parents, the media, and from colleagues in the educational community. Frequent criticisms can lower a person's self-esteem and undermine the sense of professional competency. Teachers often look to students and the community for support and encouragement, but in many instances this support does not exist, nor is it likely to be forthcoming. Therefore, it is extremely important that teachers find ways to assist and affirm each other in the school setting.

This assistance begins with a balanced perspective on the teacher's work and includes successes and strengths as well as weaknesses and problems. However, societal myths make it difficult to establish a realistic view of the contributions of teachers. Most people have been taught from an early age that self-improvement is best accomplished through constructive criticism from oneself and others. Although it is necessary to identify improvement goals, an exclusively negative approach diminishes self-esteem and can interfere with a teacher's performance in the classroom. Personal and professional growth occurs as much by building on successes and strengths as it does by narrowly focusing on individual and institutional weaknesses.

A second myth is that thinking or speaking well of oneself is synonymous with conceit and bragging, terms that accurately apply to statements that are not supported by evidence of the speaker's accomplishments or that show an

excessive conceit. Unless teachers can verbalize their successes and strengths with colleagues, they are left vulnerable to the overwhelming number of negative comments about education and teaching.

In a typical day, teachers experience numerous successes and satisfactions, but because they have been conditioned to focus on mistakes and weaknesses, they often leave school at the end of the day with a negative, stressful bias about themselves and teaching. The Successes, Satisfactions, and Professional Strengths activity described here is intended to balance the negative aspects of teaching with the positive by drawing attention to the more eustressful parts of a teacher's work. To begin, on a sheet of paper write two headings: "Successes and Satisfactions" and "Professional Strengths." Under the first, list all the job-related successes you have experienced lately. These successes may be long-term (initiating a new course in your school, inspiring an unreachable student, etc.) or short-term (explaining a difficult concept clearly, defusing a potential discipline problem, etc.). Also, list any satisfactions you have received from teaching in the last few weeks. These satisfactions may include a playful moment with students at recess, seeing a child's eyes light up from learning something, or dozens of other, often transitory, things that can occur in a typical school day. A technique to recall successes and satisfactions that some teachers find useful involves thinking back, hour by hour, over the teaching day. After you have sifted through the events of your day's schedule, try to recall the day before, and so on through the past week or two of work. If you have difficulty recalling your successes, perhaps you have narrowed your field of vision to include only the tension-producing aspects of your job.

Teachers should savor the successes and satisfactions of their work. The process of savoring is not only eustressful in itself, but also can help immunize a teacher against some of the unavoidable stresses of teaching. The "Successes and Satisfactions" list should help sensitize you to the enjoyable experiences in teaching; savoring these experiences can be a powerful preventive strategy against the destructive effects of stress and burnout.

Under the "Professional Strengths" heading, list the skills and characteristics you possess that contribute to your success as a teacher. Your strengths might include patience, creativity, good health, and organizational skills. It may be difficult at first to identify the items on this list, but strive to avoid things that negate your worth, such as: "My strengths are no big deal because that's what I'm getting paid for;" or "I don't do anything well enough to call it a strength." Keep in mind that during your career you have acquired competencies in numerous areas. Review some of your early mistakes that no longer occur because you have increased your skills. If you have watched a novice student teacher or a parent attempt to organize and teach a lesson, you probably realized anew the complex skills and knowledge you possess that are required for effective instruction.

For the person who hesitates to list strengths because it seems like bragging, remember that conceit and bragging refer to an excessive preoccupation with oneself. A listing of strengths represents a realistic appraisal of abilities, without which a narrow focus on personal deficits often leads to persistent feelings of distress.

The authors recommend completing both the "Successes and Satisfactions" and "Professional Strengths" lists with other teachers, and using the lists to stimulate group discussion and support. When a person has read both lists to the group, the other members can affirm where appropriate those events and characteristics that they also observed ("You mentioned that you are creative.

The bulletin boards that you design are really good examples of that!"), and they can add to the list items that may have been overlooked ("You didn't mention that you have a marvelous sense of humor. I think your students are very appreciative of that."). Each teacher is encouraged to record these comments and savor the good feelings that accompany sincere compliments.

This activity works best in a positive atmosphere where humiliating remarks from oneself and others are discouraged, even in jest, and where all participants cooperate to make the experience supportive for the group. A group of four members can complete the discussion in 10 to 15 minutes.

## Blocks to Change

Despite the best intentions to change individually or as part of an institution, people often resist doing the things that lead to the improvements they seek. Part of the resistance comes from inertia; it can be easier to proceed with the status quo than to expend energy on self-improvement. Also, goals may be unrealistic ("I'm going to lose 20 pounds in the next week."), or designed to please others even though the goal itself holds little personal meaning.

Three common blocks to stress management are discussed in this section. These blocks should be kept in mind as the reader considers the ideas and suggestions for change that are presented throughout this monograph.

### Red Pencil Mentality

As most people progressed through school, they undoubtedly received from their teachers papers corrected in red pencil to indicate what was wrong with their work or what needed to be improved. However, this process focused attention on deficits, or what was missing, rather than on the positive, constructive aspects of someone's efforts. Consequently, as adults, people tend to examine new ideas, plans, committee reports, etc., through a red pencil filter that looks only for the problems or shortcomings in a product. Instead of saying, "I like this part of the idea," or "I can use this piece of the plan," they dismiss a proposal or suggestion outright with little reflection on how it might be useful. Red pencil mentality views the glass as half empty, rather than half full.

When reading the strategies for stress prevention and management in the next chapter, watch for your red pencil mentality. The following questions may help: Do I find myself dismissing the use of relaxation techniques because I knew someone who tried but quit? Am I reluctant to begin <u>any</u> exercise program because jogging does not appeal to me? Do I eat pastries for breakfast and drink too much coffee at work?

The authors ask only that you keep your mind open to the concepts and techniques presented in these pages; you need not agree with them all, but you should consider those suggestions that are personally relevant to you. The adoption of only one or two of the ideas could improve your physical health and increase the satisfaction you receive from teaching.

## The Bitching Syndrome

Often it is easier and more satisfying to complain about things that cause stress than to take constructive action directed at the source of the stress. For short-term relief the venting of feelings through "bitching" can be healthy and ease tension. However, if the same situation causes problems for weeks, months, or even years, bitching usually serves no useful purpose, and contributes to the stress of the complainer and those who must listen to the same old gripes.

A person often has little or no control over the source of the complaints (e.g., the weather), or the person does not care to do anything about the problems. In carefully considering your motives for complaining, ask yourself the following questions: Am I sincerely interested in constructive problem solving? Am I only complaining about stressors over which I perceive having little control? Does satisfaction come from solving a problem or complaining about it?

It makes good sense to focus precious time and energy on issues where the investment will make a positive difference, and to dismiss those situations over which one is powerless.

## Yes, but...

Many people fall into the "Yes, but..." category. These people seek advice for their problems, but respond to specific suggestions by saying, "Yes, that's a good idea, but here are all the reasons why it won't work." Sometimes all the options are answered with a "Yes, but...," and the adviser is left with a hopeless, helpless feeling about the person's predicament. The individual is saying the problem has no solution, and that he or she is no longer responsible for personal feelings or behavior related to the stressor.

A basic premise of effective stress management is that many decisions are made daily that affect physical and emotional well-being. Although there are many events in life over which a teacher has little or no control, the teacher can take steps that not only may prevent certain stressors from occurring (e.g., learning classroom management skills), but also may diminish the harmful effects that distress can have on his or her health. Chronic "Yes, but..." responses tend to signal an unwillingness to accept personal responsibility for things one can control. In the long run, it will do the teacher little good to declare, "I have high blood pressure because of my principal. It'll be her fault when I have a stroke!" A well-timed "Yes, but..." may temporarily convince teachers that they are victims of circumstance, but it will not increase their satisfaction with teaching nor restore their health.

## Summary

This section has covered stress theory, methods to identify and clarify stressors, restoration of a balanced perspective through examining job-related successes, satisfactions, and strengths, and consideration of blocks that often prevent people from integrating stress management techniques into their life styles. Emphasis is placed on the need for self-awareness and the

importance of respect for each person's unique personality. Selye's words underscore these needs:

> Once we really understand stress, each of us will be his own best physician, for no one can appreciate our mental health needs better than ourselves. Everyone must learn to measure the stress level at which he personally functions best and then not go either above or below that. By careful observation we can gradually develop an instinctive feeling telling us that we are running above or below the stress level that corresponds to our own nature..... You must learn to balance the pleasures and stimulation of social engagements, trips and successful work against your requirements for peace, solitude and serenity. Everybody will arrive at this aim in a somewhat different manner, always characteristic of his own individuality. (1979, pp. 96-7)

Both the Stress Inventory and the Turtle/Racehorse Continuum are designed to help develop self-understanding and establish a satisfying balance of activities.

The next section offers practical information and suggestions for more effective stress management. However, these concepts will have little lasting significance unless they become part of a teacher's daily behavior. The potency of the ideas is so great that their regular practice may produce irrevocable beneficial changes in your health and happiness.

## TECHNIQUES FOR MANAGING STRESS

Managing stress involves balancing all facets of life--physical and emotional health, relationships, work, and personal satisfactions and disappointments. There is no magic answer to control stress, but certain factors--exercise, diet, sleep, interpersonal relationships, managing conflict and time, and relaxation--can be controlled by any individual to a certain degree. These are discussed in this section.

### 'One, two (puff, pant)'--Exercise

Teaching, except perhaps physical education, is primarily a mental activity: much talking, thinking, and standing, but little physical exercise. Why, then, are teachers so exhausted at the end of the school day?

Orchestrating instruction for large numbers of students involves a huge number of psychological interactions, which can include asking a question, helping an individual, sending a look to a misbehaving child, or calling on a student to recite. Teachers may have hundreds of these psychological reactions in just one hour. No wonder they are exhausted at the day's end, but the wrong thing to do is go home and spend the evening lying on a couch.

It sounds strange, but a person can have more energy after exercise than before. Physical exercise can renew the body's energy after mental fatigue. In addition to helping melt away the day's fatigue and frustration, exercise contributes to self-esteem, because a person begins to look better, stand taller, and feel proud of the self-discipline needed for a continued exercise program. Exercise, too, can reduce anxiety and relieve mild depression. Exercising often encourages adoption of a more healthy life style in general (It's hard to run after a pack of cigarettes, a huge meal, or several drinks.), and people who exercise regularly may double their odds of not having heart disease.

In planning a personal exercise program, consider the following points:

1. Choose an aerobic activity (one that requires large amounts of oxygen), such as walking fast, jogging, swimming, bicycling, or jumping rope. In his book on aerobic exercise, Kenneth Cooper (1977) outlined how often and at what pace specific activities need to be done to be aerobic and have a rejuvenating effect. The cardiovasuclar system is the combination of heart and lungs that forces oxygen to the muscles and brain. Both need large amounts of oxygen to function properly. According to medical doctors, exercise forces the body to send larger amounts of oxygen through the body quickly and with greater efficiency, which increases the capacity of the cardiovascular system to collect and distribute oxygen.

Cooper assigned points to various exercises, ranking their aerobic capacity from most to least beneficial. It should be noted that his Aerobics Maintenance Program is intended to maintain an already properly conditioned

physique. By his system, running is the most aerobic activity, worth 36 points. His running program is composed of four 20-minute stints per week. Cooper explained his point system as follows:

> Remember the objective of aerobics is to get the required number of points per week, not to exercise in any particular way or at any particular speed or intensity. Accept the fact that your condition is good even without testing if you are averaging 24 points per week (women) or 30 points per week (men). The number of weekly points you earn correlates well with your level of physical fitness. (p. 131)

Other activities Cooper rated "for the person already conditioned" include walking, swimming, racquetball et al., and stair climbing (10 average steps count as one round trip, of which you need seven per minute for 12 minutes, eight times per week for 32 points).

2. Find an activity that you can do at least three times a week. For example, cross-country skiing is aerobic, but if it is done only twice a year, the physical benefit is low.

3. Select an enjoyable activity, something that you will look forward to doing and miss if you do not do it.

4. Compete for fun. If you enter a sport with a highly competitive attitude, such as a racquetball match that you must win, you may cause yourself more tension and stress than you originally had.

5. Choose an exercise program that is independent of others so that another person cannot be your excuse for not exercising.

6. Set goals for yourself. They might be, "I'm going to walk two miles a day five times this week," or, "I'm going to swim 20 minutes each day before school." If you tell your goals to supportive friends and request that they ask you about your accomplishments at the end of the week, that in itself can be motivating.

7. Check with your physician before beginning an exercise program, especially if you are over 40 or have had physical problems. Your doctor may prescribe a stress test, which monitors your respiration and heart rates while you exercise.

8. Start small. For example, don't try to run a mile the first day. Instead, walk for five minutes, run for 30 seconds, then walk another five minutes, run another 30 seconds, and so on until you tire. The Long Run Solution (Henderson 1976) describes an excellent program for beginning to run for exercise.

9. Don't feel as if you have to be in pain. There is no rush. Think, "I'm beginning today to exercise for the rest of my life."

10. Finally, don't wait until after your first heart attack to begin exercising regularly.

'Another Doughnut, Please'--Diet

Could this portrait be you? Sharon has been up since 6 a.m., rushing to get her two children off to school; straightening the house, driving to work, and preparing her classroom for the day. Because Sharon wants to lose weight, she skipped breakfast, but by 9 a.m. she is famished. Spying doughnuts in the teachers' lounge, she gobbles down a chocolate-coated one and drinks two cups of coffee with sugar. Sharon returns to her classroom feeling energized from the sugar and caffeine, but by 11 her blood sugar is crashing. She begins to feel irritable, shaky, and impatient with her students. She counts the minutes until lunch.

At lunch, she gives up her resolution to have a small salad and downs the starchy hot lunch served to the students. After lunch Sharon feels bloated and guilty for not starting her diet. She begins to feel tired and listless. Not having much energy for her classes, she wishes the students would just leave her alone. At 2 she has a bottle of cola and a cigarette.

By 4:30, back home with her children, her blood sugar is dropping again. She snaps at her youngsters and, feeling guilty, she serves them Kool-Aid and cookies. She has a couple herself.

At 8, Sharon's husband arrives home late for dinner. While waiting, she has burned the meal, she has been unable to concentrate on the report cards she's been trying to mark, and she has been yelling at the children for bickering. Dinner is tense. Finally, Sharon crawls into bed feeling unhappy, stuffed, and vowing not to eat breakfast.

Could some of the stress in Sharon's day have been prevented by a change in her diet? Some things to consider are:

1. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. The old saying, "We should eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, and dinner like a pauper," makes sense. The body needs protein early in the day when it can use the energy; it does not need protein just before bed.

2. Breakfast should contain a protein food, such as eggs, milk, cheese, meat, fish, or nuts. Breakfast can be planned to fit any life style. For instance, if you do not feel like cooking the traditional bacon and eggs, a tuna sandwich or cheese and fruit with milk are good substitutes.

3. "Junk food," such as coffee and doughnuts, can be worse than eating nothing. Consumption of such foods raises the blood sugar quickly and then drops it.

4. When the blood sugar is low because of not eating or eating sugars and starches, a person is more susceptible to stress. During these times, mild irritations may turn into catastrophes. In describing these mood changes, William Dufty in Sugar Blues noted:

> While the glucose is being absorbed into the blood, we feel up. A quick pick-up. However, this surge of mortgaged energy is succeeded by the downs, when the bottom drops out of the blood glucose level. We are listless, tired; it requires effort to move or even think until the blood glucose level is brought up again. (1975, p. 47)

5. Although there is some dispute over the best foods to eat, in general people would probably be healthier if each day they consumed:

- a variety of foods from different food groups
- only sufficient calories to meet body needs and desirable weight
- less sugar and products made with sugar
- less salt
- more fresh fruits and vegetables, and less frozen and canned foods
- more poultry, fish, and legumes (nuts, beans, peas), and less red meat
- more protein by substituting milk (lowfat or buttermilk) for coffee
- the largest meal early in the day.

6. Students' eating habits can be poor, too, a point teachers should heed. If students are coming to school without breakfast, or with a junk food breakfast of sugar and starches, learning will be difficult for them. Also, hyperactivity in some children may be increased by their ingestion of sugar (Smith 1976), or additives, colorations, and salicylates (Feingold 1974).

## Oh, For a Good Night's Sleep

Is there a difference in how well school goes for you when you've had a good night's sleep and when you haven't? On a typical day a teacher may be bothered little by Jason T.'s third class disturbance, but on a day when the teacher has too little sleep, he or she may react with undesirable aggression.

Of course, different people require different amounts of sleep. The teacher in the next classroom may feel great with five hours of sleep, but you are exhausted unless you have eight hours. Oftentimes, too, needs for sleep change. Some people find they sleep more soundly and need sleep less when they exercise regularly. Also, sleeping too much can be a sign of stress if sleep is a form of escape. Sleep expert Dr. J. Christian Gillin (1980) offered the following tips for coping with insomnia and other sleep problems:

1. Make sure that you maintain a regular schedule. Go to bed and get up at roughly the same time each day. This gets your body into a rhythm.

2. Don't nap.

3. Be aware that alcohol, medications, and coffee can interfere with your sleep pattern.

4. Get regular exercise every morning and afternoon. Exercising at night will keep you awake.

5. Try home remedies, including things like a hot bath or glass of warm milk, when you can't sleep. A glass of wine might help, too.

## Relax?? But How!?

"What you need to do is relax," well-meaning friends and relatives may say, but relaxing is easier said than done. If you have never learned how, read on, but remember that trying too hard to relax may be frustrating. This section offers several techniques, but first a word about attitude.

## Mind over Matter

What people think about and the pictures they put into their minds affect their feelings and bodies. When an event is perceived as stressful, such as a phone call from an irate parent, the body reacts. The heart rate speeds up, the eyes dilate, and perspiration increases. The next time a teacher thinks about the event, the heart rate may increase again just from thinking about it. The teacher may comment, "That parent gives me a headache."

The situation is not that simple. The parent doesn't give you a headache; it is what you tell yourself about the parent. If you say to yourself, "This is terrible, it is awful that this parent should talk to me like this. I can't stand it," you can actually cause yourself to have a headache. In contrast, if you choose to say to yourself, "Wow, that parent is really angry, he (or she) must have had a bad day and needed to blow off steam." With the second set of messages, you are more likely to feel less stressed and avoid a headache.

The mind has some control over the thoughts that are put into it. For example, imagine that you are home alone, your house is dark, and you decide to take a shower. As you stand in the shower, what is the one thought you want to avoid? Many teachers in our stress workshops have answered, "The movie, Psycho," in which one particular scene can cause the heart to beat faster and the adrenalin to flow.

In the same manner, calming thoughts and pictures can be put into the mind. These thoughts can help give a tranquil and relaxed feeling. For instance, if while standing in the shower you choose to think about lying on a warm sunny beach listening to a gentle surf, you will have a different feeling and physical reaction than you will if you think of Psycho. Your muscles will relax and your breathing and heart rates will slow.

People do have control over the thoughts they conceive and remember. Because feelings are related to thoughts, they also have control over their feelings. No one else can make a person feel angry, frightened, or embarrassed. It is only the personal interpretation of an event--the individual's thoughts about a situation--that causes a feeling. For example, when the principal walks into a classroom, it is not the principal, but the teacher's thoughts and perceptions on the reasons for the visit that cause anxiety. The teacher who thinks negatively, "It will be awful if the principal doesn't like what I'm teaching," is likely to feel fear, whereas the teacher who chooses to think positively, "Hmmm, I'll assume the principal is coming for some helpful purpose until I know otherwise," is more likely to feel calmness. Because people have a large measure of control over their feelings, they also have control over the physical bodily responses that come from feelings. These include a heightened blood pressure that may stem from anger, or a quickened pulse that can result from fear. As illustrated here, thoughts affect a person's physical responses; so, too, physical health affects moods and emotions.

## Meditation

During waking hours and when dreaming, the mind is continuously busy with many thoughts, feelings, and images. With meditation, the mind slows down. It clears itself of all other thoughts by focusing on a single word or sound and repeating it. This mind action slows respiration and heart rate; the body

experiences rest and restoration that often is more energizing than sleep.

Erroneously, meditation is often perceived as a mysterious, religious, or strange oriental technique. The image of needing to wrap oneself in sheets, shave the head, and assume a contorted position has kept many people from learning to meditate. Actually, meditation is a simple, natural mental technique that can be learned by anyone. It requires no commitment to religious or philosophical beliefs, special diets, or chants. Brief descriptions of five meditation techniques follow.

Transcendental Meditation. Also known as TM, transcendental meditation is one of many meditative approaches. It was developed by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and brought to the United States in 1959. In TM classes participants are taught to sit quietly in a relaxed position for two 20-minute periods a day and silently repeat a mantra (a nonsense word chosen for them). Early studies (Wallace 1970; Benson 1969) found that during TM oxygen consumption decreased, heart rate slowed, skin resistance increased, and brain wave patterns changed significantly. These factors indicated changes toward calmness, tranquility, and reduction of stress. It was also found (Benson and Wallace 1972) that blood lactate levels declined during meditation, which links TM with the treatment of hypertension, blood pressure, asthma, and cardiovascular disease.

Frew (1977) studied the effects of meditation on workers and concluded that TM increases job satisfaction and production, improves relationships with co-workers and the boss, reduces turnover, and lowers the motivation to climb the business hierarchy.

The Relaxation Response. Whereas transcendental meditators must pay for a TM course to receive their mantra, the technique for the relaxation response can be learned for free. The practitioner simply repeats a word, such as "one," over and over again. Dr. Herbert Benson (1973), who developed this meditation variation, believes that the relaxation response is as effective as TM. Benson outlined six steps as follows:

1. Sit quietly in a comfortable position.

2. Close your eyes.

3. Deeply relax all your muscles, beginning at your feet and progressing up to your face. Keep them relaxed.

4. Breathe through your nose. Become aware of your breathing. As you breathe out, say the word, ONE, silently to yourself. For example, breathe IN . . . OUT, ONE; IN . . . OUT, ONE; etc. Breathe easily and naturally.

5. Continue for 10 to 20 minutes. You may open your eyes to check the time, but do not use an alarm. When you finish, sit quietly for several minutes, at first with your eyes closed and later with your eyes opened. Do not stand up for a few minutes.

6. Do not worry about whether you are successful in achieving a deep level of relaxation. Maintain a passive attitude and permit relaxation to occur at its own pace. When distracting thoughts occur, try to ignore them by not dwelling upon them and

return to repeating ONE. With practice, the response should come with little effort. Practice the technique once or twice daily, but not within two hours after any meal, since the digestive processes seem to interfere with the elicitation of the Relaxation Response: (pp. 114-115)

Progesssive Relaxation. Another technique, developed some years ago by Dr. Edmund Jacobson (1938), is progressive relaxation. It is simply the process of tensing and relaxing each part of the body consecutively. For example, sit quietly with your eyes closed and first tense the muscles in your feet as tightly as you can and let them slowly relax. If you continue in this manner to the legs, stomach and buttocks, shoulders and upper body, arms, hands, neck, face and jaws, the entire body will enjoy a state of relaxation.

Autogenic Training. Developed by Dr. H.H. Schultz, autogenic training is self-hypnosis in that the practitioner uses imagery and suggested phrases to tell the mind that the body is becoming quiet, heavy, and warm--a state of relaxation. A series of suggestive statements, such as the following, can be read or heard to produce a relaxed state:

1. I feel quiet.
2. I am beginning to feel quite relaxed.
3. My feet feel heavy and relaxed.
4. My ankles, my knees and my hips feel heavy, relaxed and comfortable.
5. My solar plexus, and the whole central portion of my body, feel relaxed and quiet.
6. My hands, my arms and my shoulders feel heavy, relaxed and comfortable.
7. My neck, my jaws and my forehead feel relaxed. They feel comfortable and smooth.
8. My whole body feels quiet, heavy, comfortable and relaxed.
9. (Continue alone for a minute.)
10. I am quite relaxed.
11. My arms and hands are heavy and warm.
12. I feel quite quiet.
13. My whole body is relaxed and my hands are warm, relaxed and warm.
14. My hands are warm.

15. Warmth is flowing into my hands, they are warm, warm.

16. I can feel the warmth flowing down my arms into my hands.

17. My hands are warm, relaxed and warm.

18. (Continue alone for a minute.)

19. My whole body feels quiet, comfortable and relaxed.

20. My mind is quiet.

21. I withdraw my thoughts from the surroundings and I feel serene and still.

22. My thoughts are turned inward and I am at ease.

23. Deep within my mind I can visualize and experience myself as relaxed, comfortable and still.

24. I am alert, but in an easy, quiet, inwardly turned way.

25. My mind is calm and quiet.

26. I feel an inward quietness.

27. (Continue alone for a minute.)

28. (The relaxation and reverie is now concluded and the whole body is reactivated with a deep breath and the following phrases:) I feel life and energy flowing through my legs, hips, solar plexus, chest, arms and hands, neck and head...The energy makes me feel light and alive. (Stretch.)

(These phrases were adapted in 1966 from Autogenic Training and developed by Elmer and Alyce Green of the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kan., for research in self-regulation methods.)

Biofeedback. Through biofeedback a person can monitor aspects of the body of which he or she would not have been aware otherwise. For example, most people are not aware of their blood pressure, but by using a blood pressure cuff they can find out. In stress reduction, biofeedback can be used to instantly monitor the level of relaxation, and thereby to achieve a deeper state of tranquility. Alpha brain waves, decreased muscle tension, and skin temperature (galvanic skin response) can be measured on biofeedback equipment, and the state of relaxation noted for later recall.

Sophisticated biofeedback monitors are small machines, called thermosters, which sell for $100 to $400. A user tapes the thermoster's connecting wires to the fingertips and relaxes in whatever way chosen--meditation, progressive relaxation, imagining being in a comfortable spot, autogenic suggestion. Meanwhile, the thermoster measures hand temperature and indicates through a dial and a sound whether the body is

becoming more relaxed or more tense (hand temperature increases with relaxation). As a person learns to relax and raise the hand temperature on the biofeedback monitor, that learning can be transferred to situations when the monitor is disconnected.

Currently, physicians use biofeedback for patients with chronic pain or psychiatric distress, but many others are learning to relax with this method. An exciting benefit of biofeedback is the control a person learns to have over the body as the level of relaxation changes.

In school settings also, biofeedback is being tried successfully. Teachers are leading students through relaxation exercises before tests, after lunch and recess, and in counseling sessions. At Springview Elementary School in Flushing, Michigan, students are using biofeedback equipment to learn to raise their hand temperatures and thereby increase their levels of relaxation. If the students find they can control their hand temperatures, they may also begin to exert greater control over their classroom behavior.

## Interpersonal Relations and Conflict Management

Relationships that are filled with tension, conflict, and cold vibrations can cause distress. The teacher who looks the other way as you pass in the hall, the principal who never seems pleased with anything you do, or the student whom you do not like can all contribute to your feelings of stress. Similarly, if you recall an argument with your spouse or a confrontation with your teenage son or daughter, you will bring that anguish to your classroom.

Relationships are what the involved parties make them to be. They can be improved, as the following ideas suggest:

### Open Discussion

Openly discuss conflicts with the people involved. This is a risky, but revealing and relieving process. When possible, choose a time to talk when both parties are feeling little tension. You may open a conversation with, "It seems like we're not as close as we used to be. I'd like to talk about that," or "It seems as if you're angry with me. Did I do something that bothered you?" Then, listen to the response.

### Active Listening

Practicing new communication techniques such as "active listening" may feel uncomfortable at first, but the effort can be an effective way to work through conflict. Active listening (Gordon 1974) has been used by counselors and other helping professionals for years. Through active listening, teachers can improve their relationships with students, co-workers, family, and friends. To "actively listen," a person needs only to attend carefully to what a speaker is saying, and then simply, without judgment, reflect back to the person the content or feelings that were expressed. When you reflect back to the speaker what you have heard, you let that person know that you are concerned and listening. At that point, he or she can make a personal judgment, such as, "Yes, I really did feel ...," or clarify a point such as, "I wasn't feeling ...., it was more like ..." In either case, active

listening serves as an invitation to the speaker to tell more. Observe in the following example how Deborah is able to help Barbara, the teacher next door.

Barbara: Deborah, I just want to strangle that Mark. He is always interrupting in class. You know I've been planning this special lesson on death for weeks. Today I was talking about my feelings when my father died, and he was cracking jokes!

Deborah: That must have been very disturbing when you wanted the students to take the discussion seriously. (active listening)

Barbara: Yes, it was! So then I calmly asked Mark to go to the office. Do you know what he said? "You can't make me!"

Deborah: Then you felt like you wanted to strangle him! (active listening)

Barbara: Right, and I almost did! I lost my composure, Deborah, I screamed at him right in front of the whole class. I was ranting and raving. He left, but I was so upset afterwards that I couldn't go on with class. So the other students just chatted and played around for the rest of the class period. I feel so embarrassed. I am still shaking.

Deborah: Wow, Barbara, that must have been terribly upsetting for you. (active listening) I don't know if it helps you feel any better, but I had a similar blowup with Jon last week.

Barbara: You did? You always seem so calm. It helps to know I'm not the only one.

Deborah: You're not.

Barbara: I don't know what to do now. I've thought about just not saying anything in class about this incident tomorrow, but I think I would feel like I was just ignoring the problem.

Deborah: Uh huh. You're not sure what you want to do? (active listening)

Barbara: I'm thinking about going down to the office now and talking to Mark. I'm hoping we can straighten this thing out.

Deborah: That sounds good. It may be that if you are honest in telling him how you feel, he may be able to evaluate his behavior, too.

Barbara: Maybe, I don't know. I've been thinking, too, that tomorrow I would like to tell the class that I am sorry I became so enraged.

Deborah: It might give them a chance to see that you are human, too.

Barbara: I feel so much better, Deborah. Thanks for listening.

Deborah: I'll want to know how things go with Mark and the class. Please tell me tomorrow, OK?

Barbara: Okay. See you tomorrow at lunch.

Deborah did not give Barbara any answers; she did not solve the problem for her. However, she was there listening, providing support, and helping Barbara feel less alone. That can be a help in coping with stressful situations.

As you think about your own relationships, ask yourself: Do I have people in my personal and professional lives to whom I can talk after a hard day, or when trying to make a difficult decision? If not, you may want to seek out some people with whom you would like to develop that kind of relationship. The other side of the coin is that people are counting on you to provide support for them.

## 'I' Messages

Thomas Gordon, in Teacher Effectiveness Training (1974), suggested that a listener often confronts another person by criticizing, ridiculing, preaching, diagnosing, advising, using sarcasm, etc. These responses hurt people's self-esteem, and block further discussion about their concerns. Most confrontations are in the forms of "You ought to know better," "You're acting like a baby," or "You had better stop that." These are You messages. Instead, Gordon suggests sending I messages, such as: "I feel angry when you write on the wall at school"; "It is frustrating to me when the class is not listening"; and "I am feeling overburdened by having recess duty every day this week."

For example, compare the differing results from using You messages and I messages in the following situation:

| You messages | I messages |
| --- | --- |
| John: (student tapping pencil on desk) | John: (student tapping pencil on desk) |
| Mrs. Miller (teacher): John, stop making that noise. | Mrs. Miller (teacher): John, I'm having a hard time concentrating on my work when I hear that tapping sound. |
| John: What noise? It's not hurting anyone. | John: Oh, but I'm tapping my pencil because I'm bored. |
| Mrs. Miller: John, you are purposefully trying to disturb the entire class and you're to stop it right now. | Mrs. Miller: Oh, I see. How about if we talk after class about ways to make this material more interesting for you. |
| John: I wasn't doing anything. | John: Okay. |
| Mrs. Miller: Yes, you were, and if you do it one more time, you're really in trouble. | |

In the first example, the teacher is using a You message to tell John there is something wrong with what he is doing. John reacts with anger because he feels personally attacked; productive communication is blocked. In contrast, in the I message example, the teacher takes ownership for the problem and describes why the situation is disturbing to her. She is not critical of John, but simply stating what is bothering her.

Although I messages are inappropriate for use in some situations, Gordon has found that this approach meets three criteria for effective confrontation: It has a high probability for promoting a willingness to change; it contains minimal negative evaluation; and it does not injure the relationship.

## Self-Awareness of Conflict Styles

In times of conflict, certain ways of responding become more prominent and can block a person's relations with others. Although most people learned their behavior patterns in childhood, they can learn new responses. Virginia Satir in Peoplemaking (1972), identified five ways of interacting. In reading these, consider the questions: Do I recognize any of these styles in my professional and personal experiences? Is there anything I would like to change about my conflict responses?

The Placater. Placaters try to please the other person by apologizing and never disagreeing. They are "yes people." They talk as if they and their needs are unimportant. These people never say, "I want" or "I need."

The Blamer. Blamers are fault finders, dictators, and bossy. They act superior and seem to say, "If it weren't for you, everything would be all

right." They blame others for their needs not being met, and for their stress. They often find a "placater" to blame.

The Computer. Computers are very correct and very reasonable, lacking any semblance of feeling. They are calm, cool, collected. Their voices are dry and monotonous, and their words tend to be abstract. "Shoulds" are often used in their conversations.

The Distracter. What distracters do or say is irrelevant to what anyone else is doing or saying. They never respond to a point. They say, through their behavior, that the situations of others are unimportant.

The Negotiator. Negotiators say that both your needs and their needs are important. These people express their desires and request that others do the same. Theirs is a powerful, direct way of interacting.

If you recognize yourself in any of the first four descriptions, you may want to consider beginning to change your ways of responding to conflict. Taking a class in assertiveness training to learn to express wants directly may be helpful. You may also want to read Satir's Peoplemaking to develop greater insight into the self-awareness styles and to learn ways of changing them. Numerous other self-help books have been written on assertiveness styles, too.

## Time Management

Often teachers complain that not having enough time to do everything they want is a cause of stress. There never seems to be enough time to give individual attention to the students, to complete the mandatory forms, to get to the bottom of the papers to be checked, to be with one's own children.

A fresh way of looking at this monster "time" is to think right now of one thing you do not have time to do. Finish this sentence aloud now: "I don't have time to ...." For example, "I don't have time to write letters." Try it a different way. Use the same example, but complete this sentence: "I choose not to ...." "I choose not to write letters." Feels different, doesn't it?

Two important things to remember are that everyone has the same amount of time, and no one can do everything. Therefore, each individual needs to set priorities and choose to do the things that are personally most important. For example, a person cannot read every book, travel to every city, nor be good friends with everyone. It is easy, though, to slide along doing what others would have one do, what is easiest, or what is habitual. As the saying goes, "Time is money." You can let others spend your time for you, or you can spend it yourself on what will bring you the most return; the choice is yours.

To help you think about what is most important for you, try an activity from Alan Lakein's book, How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life (1973). On a sheet of paper, under the heading "Lifetime Goals," spend three minutes to imagine and list anything you would like to accomplish in your life. Think of goals related to career, leisure, and family. Now take one minute to look over the list and star the three most important goals. Write another heading: "Three Year Goals." Again, take three minutes to list things you would like to accomplish and one minute to star the three most important items.

Under the heading "Six Month Goals," write down the things you would do if you knew you had only six months to live (assume that your estate and accounts are settled). Again, spend three minutes composing the list and another minute to star your three most important goals.

The last heading is, "Top Three Lifetime Goals." From the nine items you have starred, choose three that hold the top priorities in your life. As you look at these three goals, consider what you are doing now to attain them. After each goal statement, write down one specific thing that you will do in the next week to move toward your goals.

With this exercise, Lakein forces people to evaluate whether their daily tasks are leading toward their goals.

Time Management for Teachers

The same time management strategies are inappropriate for different kinds of work. The following list describes time-consuming items that specifically affect teachers and suggests ways to cope with these tasks.

1. Never do anything a student can do just as well. This includes running errands, paperwork, building scenery for the play, and cleaning the classroom. Not only will this save you time, but it is also likely to contribute to a student's self-esteem; and when students feel helpful, they perceive ownership and feel pride.

2. Don't take papers home. The process of lugging a bag of papers back and forth may contribute to guilt feelings when you don't check them. Also, taking work home means taking time away from your family and relaxation.

3. Find alternatives to grading every paper yourself. Ideas that have worked for other teachers include having students check their own papers as a learning experience, having them mark each others' papers, and assigning competent older students to check and record grades on objective tests. Also, you can quickly grade papers yourself as students finish them in class. Finally, you might ask yourself: Does every paper really need to be checked?

4. Try to group phone calls. Often, finding an available phone in the school is difficult in itself. If you need to call Jon's mother about his misbehavior, consider calling Fred's parents at the same time to let them know how well he did in math. Also, call the museum about next week's field trip.

5. Handle each piece of paper only once. For example, if you go to your school mailbox tomorrow and find a note asking which inservice program you want to attend, your interest in a PTA dinner, or your vote for an education representative, answer that note immediately. If you take the paper back to your desk and put it down, at the end of the day you probably will pick it up again and say, "Oh yes, what was this about?" Tomorrow you may do the same thing. Two days later you will be reminded that your response is overdue so you go back to your desk for the note. It takes 10 minutes to shuffle through your desk top to find it, and again you will reread it to respond.

This scene is more efficient if, while standing by the mailbox, you immediately jot down the reply and return it to the proper box. The decision is made and you do not have to think about it again.

6. Make a Do list every day. Leave routine items off your list, but add those that require special attention. Writing a task on paper relieves the mind of the burden of continually thinking about it. It also feels good when an item is completed and crossed off the list.

7. Do the hardest thing early in the day. What a good feeling it is to know that it is only 9 a.m. and already you have accomplished a dreaded task.

8. Establish routines that students can carry out. Tasks that can be completed without your direction saves you time and energy. For example, if students know what is expected of them at the beginning of each day, they can take attendance, the lunch count, arrange the room, pass out papers, and begin assignments, thus freeing you to concentrate on other matters.

9. Learn to say no. Much time can be saved for high priority items by saying "no," or "not right now," to lesser priorities. It may not be easy, but it is essential.

10. Use wait time effectively. Time spent in a doctor's waiting room, a grocery store line, or at a train crossing can be used for reading, jotting down ideas, or listing things to do. This time is too valuable to waste.

11. Become aware of your best internal time. "Internal time" is necessary for thinking, planning, and writing. For many people, this time is in the morning when they are freshest; for others, it may be late at night.

12. Ask yourself: How would things be if I did not do this right now? If your answer is, "Not so bad," you might want to consider doing something more productive.

13. Plan something each week that excites you. Exciting events may include baking in the classroom, teaching a new unit, directing a play, or using computers. When you have enthusiasm for the school day, the hours are more likely to pass quickly.

14. Use break periods to restore energy. A walk around the school building, a few minutes with your feet up, a nonschool-related conversation with a colleague, or a few minutes alone to read the newspaper or do relaxation exercises can help you be more productive.

## Summary

It is impossible for one person to tell another what must be done to manage stress. Every individual must develop a personal stress management plan. This chapter has introduced management ideas related to exercise, diet, sleep, relaxation, relationships, and time. Although there is no single magic answer to handling life's daily ups and downs, one necessary element for control is the desire to do something about the things that can be changed, and then following through with a plan of action.

## OTHER OPTIONS IN STRESS MANAGEMENT

No discussion of stress can conclude without mentioning, however briefly, the benefits of support from family and co-workers and the option of changing careers to reduce distress. In addition, this final chapter reviews the management techniques and suggestions discussed in the previous pages.

### You Are Not Alone

During hundreds of stress management workshops for educators, the authors' observations, discussions, and research have confirmed numerous common stressors among teachers, including lack of support, strained interpersonal relations, and floods of paperwork, discussed earlier. Convinced that people depend on each other, we set a workshop goal to help participants realize that they are not alone with their problems. That is, their peers experience similar situations of on-the-job stress. We believe that by talking and listening to one's peers, a person can feel less isolated and provide mutual support, two actions that in themselves can relieve the physical effects of stress. In both formal and informal peer support groups, from happenstance gatherings in the teachers' lounge to inservice workshops that have been planned for months, teachers can discuss their common stressors and take action as a group to reduce part of the stress in their work lives.

Supportive peer groups also can mean friends who offer help individually when a person is down and reinforcement when things go right. For example, genuine comments such as "Nice job with the school assembly," "That's an interesting, well-organized lesson plan," and "You have a good rapport with your students," can make a person's day much brighter. In doing so, these kinds of comments also aid in alleviating the harmful effects of distress. An excellent resource for teachers who are thinking of beginning a support group is: Support Groups: A Manual for Facilitators and Participants by Kirschenbaum and Glaser (1978).

### If All Else Fails, Change Jobs

On the basis of your self-analysis, you may decide that only a change in jobs can reduce your distress. However, before you turn in your letter of resignation, you may want to investigate ways to make changes within education. The following suggestions are offered for guidance:

1. Investigate flexible work schedules. Part-time employment, sabbaticals, child care leaves, teacher exchanges, and temporary project reassignments can all provide rejuvenation. Some school districts have adopted a year-round school concept called "45-15," which provides for 15 days of vacation for every 45 worked.

2. Look into the possibility of an education job other than classroom teaching. With minimal additional training, you may qualify for a position as a counselor, reading specialist, administrator, or consultant.

3. Consider switching to a new teaching position by changing grades, schools, or subject areas. At first glance, the idea may appear to be a stress inducer, but remember that not all stress is bad. A new teaching position may provide the motivation and excitement needed to prevent burnout.

4. Learn something new. Attend workshops and college classes, travel, read, and explore interests, because the new things you learn may lead to job opportunities as well as provide immediate stimulation.

5. Explore careers outside of education. Many teachers are attending "Alternative Careers for Teachers" workshops (Sparks and Allen 1980). At these sessions, participants are helped to adapt their teaching skills for use in business, management, and other professions. They also learn change strategies from former teachers who have made the transition.

6. Consult reference books. If you consider changing careers, but are unsure of the next step, several books may be helpful. What Color is Your Parachute? (Bolles 1972) and The Three Boxes of Life (Bolles 1978) are examples.

7. Seek career counseling available through university career planning centers and most university counseling departments. You may find useful materials at the counseling department at your district's high school.

8. Talk to family, friends, and people with jobs similar to your interests. Networks of people are common sources of job information.

## Summary

This monograph has mentioned such areas as diet, exercise, sleep, relaxation, time management, and conflict management, all of which are aspects of life over which an individual can exert some control to prevent and cope with stress. In addition, it has been found through stress management workshops that educators can often be the best resources for each other. We would like to share from these workshops some other ways teachers have used to cope with stress:

yoga
prayer
private counseling
assertiveness training
a warm bath
listening to music
reading fiction for fun
cooking and housework
taking a walk
laughing at a silly television program
sex

finding a quiet spot in the school to be alone
writing in a journal
playing sports and games
talking to friends
flow experiences--activities in which we can immerse ourselves so deeply that afterwards we wonder, "Wow, I didn't even realize two hours went by!" (Furlong 1976)

Regardless of what you do, if you want to make lasting changes in reducing stress for yourself, choose activities that are acceptable and exciting to you. For instance, if you decide to play tennis three mornings a week no matter what, but you abhor tennis, dislike getting up in the morning, and don't like the person with whom you play, your stress reducing technique more than likely will increase your distress. However, you may find that you enjoy another physical activity.

To move from reading about stress reduction to integrating the strategies into your life may require changing behavior patterns and ways of thinking that were acquired in childhood. The authors suggest that you not try to change everything at once, but choose one or two goals for yourself, and write them down or tell a friend. Then decide the first steps toward your goals and begin. For example, if you decide to take up jogging, your long-range goal might be, "I would like to jog two miles a day." However, it would be both unrealistic and dangerous for an beginning exerciser to run two miles the first time out. Initial steps might include: '"Tonight I will walk for a half hour." "Tomorrow on my half-hour walk I will run for 30 seconds every five minutes," or "Tomorrow I will buy running shoes." Also, by writing down your goals, you can chart your own progress, and telling them to a friend will provide added incentive.

The authors acknowledge that changing your life style may be the most difficult thing you ever do, but the payoffs can be tremendous. An obvious reward may be greater longevity, but also the quality of your work and personal life, your energy level, and zest for living, as well as inner peace and tranquility may all be affected by your decision and action to reduce distress. Finally, your students will reap the benefits of not having a burned-out teacher.

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